

6 April
1953

Dear old boy: [My Kraft]

How can TOS explain all of this? He cannot, at least in terms of excusing himself. But your line "I never treated you this way when you had dough" is so true and so funny that I must at least make an attempt.

To start in: I was a fool for coming down here. The line of supply to my living source is so tenuous that when I do work the people who owe me for it mistake my absence for my death, and simply do not pay without the strongest kind of pressure being exerted. I went flat about June. Then I wrote an original screenplay and sold it for \$10,000. But the bastards didn't pay. I had to make two trips to enforce collection, and still have not got it all. Then Cleo got sick. She went from bad to worse, into a complete malnutritional breakdown. It took daily quantities of amino acids, vitamins, blood plasma and finally whole blood even to get her in condition for the hospital. Then the stern business, which ordinarily is not bad, but which in this instance disclosed four ulcers. All cut out, all fine. But she had the spinal, and it went wrong, as it does in one of perhaps 2,000 cases. Six and one-half days of the most terrible headache medicine knows. Then abrupt cessation, and a thin and wan girl was finally dismissed.

Four days later we vacated our house---too expensive---and moved into an apartment. Then the government slapped an extra 1950-51 assessment of \$7500 against me. With it went a lien on my \$20,000 trust deed against the ranch, and a promise they'd seize and sell the lien if I didn't pay by the end of December, 1952. I sold some stuff and gave them a G for thirty days extension. Thirty days later I flew to L.A. and got a note out of the guys who owed me the 10 Gs (for \$3,000) which I cashed with Seniel Ostrow, thus permitting me to bring the balance down further---with a further 60 day extension.

As the 60 days approached an end, I hadn't pot nor window, and stood to lose the whole deed. Here occurred a curious thing. In the autumn I'd written another original, and sent it out under the name of a young man who'd never been heard of in Hollywood. He submitted it. Meanwhile, unbeknown to me, he died. Two months after his death the story, in which I'd given up all hope, sold for \$7500. My problem---how to get my share before the government moved. By the most extraordinary kind of correspondence, I managed to get \$3,000 from his mother (who is rich) just in time to raise the lien. So the ranch is saved (that is, the trust deed s)---and things look better.

Now in the midst of all this, I had daily hope of writing you and sending a small part of the owings. As this prospect diminished, I grew ashamed of the fact of my silence, and

out of this shame the silence persisted. And then it seemed that each day, each hour almost, some new emergency was upon me. Letters stacked up. I said---"in three more days I'll have time to sit down and spend a day or two on back correspondence". And they never came. And so, and so, and so.

Even now it is hump like hell trying to find fifty bucks; but up until the first of last month, it was even worse. I begin to learn (and appreciate) what others have gone through. I always did admire the way you handled adversity, but I never actually realized (how can one without doing it?) the series of acute internal crises and belly-gripings that accompany the task. Anyhow, there is my confession, full and complete. I truly am sorry---and if I'm ever lucky enough to assemble enough dough in one pile to haul my stern (and those of my family, all of which are growing into larger sterns) back to the U.S.A. I think I'll have things licked.

Now for the other matter. Do not be troubled about the Pepper Pot. When I first came down here, some thirteen months ago, he made a remark against you. I called him. It turned out he still resents some old occasion when you sat in judgment upon him. I told him this was an old story, and that resentment of such things was the sure sign of the bureaucrat. No more was ever heard. However, after your note, which conveyed to me your impression that he was running around all the time full of calumny, I taxed him again in front of his wife. He swore he had never said anything. But she reminded him that one night, very drunk, he had shot off to Jill's young man. Then he remembered. He was contrite, considered his words to the young man to have been ill-advised, and said he would not do it again. To my knowledge the young man and I are the only ones he has ever said such things to. It is my opinion he will never say them again. And if he does, it is really of no consequence, for his opinions are not as highly regarded as you may think. But it was stopped the day after I received your letter, and has not resumed since, and if it does I will handle it competently. Believe me, old boy, I am fond of you and I respect and trust you: if a man doesn't like the color of your hair I can't argue with him, but if he questions the quality of your devotion, I can and have and will---although I have heard it voiced only in this one instance. There. It is done. Please think no more of it.

About us (I realize most of this has been about us: please don't think what personal information preceded the last paragraph to be whining---it was simply an explanation of silence)---about us:

Cleo is feeling fairly well. She hasn't much energy, needs lots of sleep, and is still shockingly thin. We stuff her with cream and other disgusting things. I think she needs the California altitude and climate to stage a full recovery, but she actually is better now than she has been in a year. Nikola is taller than Cleo and damn it all goes out with boys. At this cursed American school they apparently start love as they discard diapers, and I find it a burden, a bore and a

worry. However there's nothing but to let her do it, for this is Rome, and we must all wear togas. I will, however, be damned glad to get her back to L.A. or somewhere. Chris is extremely handsome, terribly strong, and toots a trumpet in the high school band. He parades with others every Saturday at the football games, clad in immaculate white trousers and a red jacket. He blows very hard on his trumpet, and practices it with maddening devotion. I forgot to say that Nikola is also very pretty---although at present it is in a kind of blowsy, over-fleshed way, for she has got fat. It's girl fat from eating too much, and vanity will ~~mix~~ ultimately whittle down both her appetite and her arse. Then she will be quite a thing. As it is, when I watch her slunge around with the vacuous eyes of adolescence and the body of Shirley Booth in "Come Back Little Sheba"---I blow my cork, old boy. I blow high, and little good it does me. Mitzi, to complete the report, is dazzling both physically and intellectually. And I am in perfect shape. Turning gray as a goat, but I think it's not age (only 47) but the shorts that does it.

Now! I have done it. I have given you a full report. You said if I did you'd write. I shall therefore expect a reply from you within ten months, since my own record does not qualify me for prompter service.

Please give Rheat all of our love, and ask Jill for us how many times she has fallen in love lately. We do think of all of you very often, and look forward some day to seeing you under fairer skies which, I feel, may not be too far in the future.

As always,

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